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A philosophical critique of psychological studies of emotion: The example of jealousy

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The aim of this article is to provide a critical review of recent writings about jealousy in psychology, as seen from a philosophical perspective. At a more general level of inquiry, jealousy offers a useful lens through which to study generic issues concerned with the conceptual and moral nature of emotions, as well as the contributions that philosophers and social scientists can make to understanding them. Hence, considerable space is devoted to comparisons of psychological and philosophical approaches to emotion research in general. It turns out that although (Aristotle-style) arguments about the necessary conceptual features of jealousy *qua* specific emotion, do carry philosophical mileage, they may fail to cut ice with psychologists who tend to focus on jealousy as a broad dimension of temperament. The review reveals a disconcerting lack of cross-disciplinary work on jealousy: the sort of work that has moved the discourse on other emotions (such as gratitude) forward in recent years.

Keywords: jealousy; emotion research; interdisciplinarity; conceptual analysis; moral justification

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Introduction

This article reviews some of the recent literature on jealousy in psychology, as seen from the perspective of philosophy. At a more general level of inquiry, jealousy offers a useful lens through which to study generic issues concerned with the conceptual and moral nature of emotions, as well as the contributions that philosophers and social scientists, in separation or in tandem, can make to understanding them. Hence, I hope that the arguments presented in what follows will be of interest even to those emotion enthusiasts who have not warmed to the study of jealousy in particular. As I provided an overview of both philosophical and social scientific literatures on jealousy in an earlier work (Kristjánsson 2002), I will limit my purview here mostly to the last decade and a half.

It must be acknowledged at the beginning that there is no conceptual consensus internal to either philosophy or psychology on what jealousy really 'is': namely, about its essential conceptual contours. One commonly shared assumption – although by no means uncontested – is that jealousy is a 'compound emotion': an emotion made up a number of other more 'basic' emotions in a specific combination. I have argued that the ingredients in this unique compound are anger, envy and righteous indignation; but other proposed candidates range from fear to sadness, frustration and disappointment (see critical overviews in Kristjánsson 2002, 2016). Slightly more consensus seems to exist on the logical form of the emotion. Most theorists[1] consider jealousy (in its basic episodic sense) to be an emotion with a *quadratic* structure, that is incorporating four variables: A is jealous of B because of x, a favour that B has received or is about to receive from C – where A (the jealous person) is the *subject* of the emotion; x (the perceived relative favouring of B over A by C) is its general *object*; B (the 'rival' or 'interloper') is its specific *target*; and C (A's desired benefactor of the favour) is its *source*. Psychologists have, until recently, been preoccupied with cases where 'x' denotes a favour of a romantic or sexual nature. However, attention now seems to be

shifting towards other forms of perceived relative disfavouring, such as sibling jealousy, classroom jealousy and workplace jealousy, as we see below.

Recent studies of other emotions from an interdisciplinary perspective (see e.g. Gulliford, Morgan and Kristjánsson 2013) have revealed that – while at best mutually enriching – the work done by philosophers and psychologists on individual emotions is often deeply divided. At the same time, we have also learnt that research on particular emotions is most likely to progress when philosophers and psychologists engage one another in dialogue and provide grist for each other's mills (see e.g. the recent edited volume by Carr 2016, on gratitude). In default of cross-disciplinary work of that kind, psychological inquiry faces the risk of becoming conceptually unsophisticated, with language 'going on holiday' (to recall Wittgenstein's well known quip: 1973, §38, 232), and philosophical inquiry of becoming unduly abstract, at best, or utterly trivial (for any practical intents and purposes), at worst. As noted later, psychologists rarely cite philosophical sources on jealousy. Philosophers seldom take account of psychological findings on jealousy either: a trends that harks back all the way to Farrell's (1980) ground-breaking conceptual work. This contrasts sharply with an emerging discursive tradition within philosophical emotion theory of taking empirical research seriously, although it must be admitted that this 'tradition' is so far mostly confined to theorists adopting a controversial neo-sentimentalist and social intuitionist position (see e.g. Prinz 2007).

The aim of this article is twofold. I begin by exploring differences of philosophical and psychological approaches to emotion research in general, often drawing on examples from the recently abundant literature on gratitude which contrasts sharply with the relatively miniscule jealousy literature.[2] The aim of this section is to offer a general philosophical critique of psychological accounts of emotion. More specifically, I argue that when philosophers and psychologists seem to disagree about conceptual methods to study

emotions, and about the moral standing of emotions, the concepts of emotion they are working with are often radically different in *scope*, and hence not competing. That realisation should be helpful in dispelling misunderstandings and, perhaps, making representatives of the two camps more mutually accommodating. I then turn to the second aim of the article which is to critique recent work on jealousy in psychology. I show how that work is *informed* (and, from a philosophical perspective, *constrained*) by the general assumptions that I unpacked in the previous section. I wrap up in the final section with some concluding remarks about where this inquiry has led us and what lessons can be learnt from it.

Crossing or mending fences? Philosophers and psychologists on emotion

Recent years have seen significant efforts being made to cross the traditional fences between philosophy and psychology in emotion research. The upsurge of (Aristotle-inspired) virtue ethics in moral philosophy is partly to thank, or blame, for those efforts; after all, virtue ethics is a naturalistic theory, which most of its spokespeople take to mean that all moral theorising is in principle answerable to empirical data on what actually makes people flourish or flounder. Some philosophers working within this theory have even started to engage in 'experimental philosophy' (cf. Alfano 2016). Virtue ethical naturalism has also attracted considerable following among psychologists who see in it, finally, philosophy conducted by academics they can do business with: those who do not simply peer omnisciently down on the stumbling of ordinary people from thick-on-theory-thin-on-evidence ivory towers. Notice, for instance, the favourable stance towards virtue ethics taken by moral psychologists Lapsley and Narvaez (2008), although they do insist that 'mending fences' is still sometimes preferable to 'crossing fences'.

It would be a grave mistake to think, however, that academic fence-crossing is a more convenient endeavour than fence-mending or automatically more fruitful. It continues to be a

tall order, for example, to try to move seamlessly between literatures in the two fields (as witnessed e.g. by Gulliford, Morgan and Kristjánsson 2013, in the case of gratitude). Before exploring the recent psychological literature on jealousy, it will be instructive to consider some of the persisting general differences that characterise philosophical and psychological approaches to emotion: differences that constitute common stumbling blocks to mutual enrichment. Those differences then offer helpful pegs on which to hang the subsequent discussion.

When I entered the field of emotion research, I quickly encountered two stereotypes about relevant differences. According to the first stereotype, philosophers rely in their conceptual methods on the intuitions of 'the wise', if not simply their own armchair musings, whereas psychologists survey the intuitions of 'the many' and attempt to make specifications of terms social scientific all the way down to the conceptual ground. Second, while philosophers are obsessed with questions of normativity, concerning the moral value of emotions, psychologists are worried about passing normative judgements and confine themselves to exploring the positive or negative 'valence' of emotions *qua* felt quality.

As with most sweeping generalisations, however, those two do not bear close inspection. First, while it is true that philosophers tend be mute about their methods or refer annoyingly to 'what we would say' about an emotion – without specifying who those 'we' are, or why 'what we would say' should have bedrock status – psychologists are often not that interested in the usage or intuitions of 'the many' either, relying instead on dictionary conceptualisations or *argumentum-ad-verecundiam* nods to previous authorities in the field – if not simply on what they themselves 'feel' (Watkins, Woodward, Stone and Kolts 2003, 432) about the emotion concept. Thus, when psychologists announce that they 'will refrain from engaging in the theoretical battles among researchers about the definition of what jealousy is or is not' (Volling, Kennedy and Jackey 2013, 388), one may suspect that, a few

lines later, ferocious conceptualisations will be engaged in and assumed henceforth without argument. Second, not all philosophers are focused primarily on the moral value of emotions; orthodox Kantians for example think that emotion hinders rather than facilitates moral judgement. Conversely, psychologists neither can avoid normativity – for the simple reason that a constantly value-neutral vocabulary is not available for the discussion of human affairs – nor are they particularly keen on doing so in practice, although they do tend to couch their normative judgements in terms of instrumental conduciveness to the taken-for-granted value of subjective well-being, or to what people generally consider valuable (see e.g. Peterson and Seligman 2004). All in all, then, opinions on emotion in philosophy and psychology are too various – and converge and diverge too unsystematically – to be adequately placed with references to the above stereotypes.

It remains to consider some differences that nevertheless do exist between philosophical and psychological approaches to emotions. I focus on two below: *conceptual-cum-methodological* and *moral*. One may introduce the first in a roundabout way by pointing out an apparent similarity between philosophical and psychological approaches: when discussing the value or disvalue of emotions (be it instrumental or intrinsic), both are typically more focused on emotions as traits or dispositions rather than episodes. However, the reasons for this focus are different. Philosophers typically home in on trait-forms of emotions because of their concerns about issues of *responsibility*, harking back to Aristotle's well-known point that while we are jointly responsible (along with our moral educators) for the gradual creation of our emotion traits, we are not responsible for episodic emotions subsequently resulting from those traits (Aristotle 1985, 41 [1105b20–1106a7]). The reason why psychologists are primarily interested in the trait-forms is quite different; it is an implication of the *predictivism* which animates social science. The psychologist's Eldorado is to find a new trait of personality or temperament that predicts significant life outcomes –

most importantly subjective well-being – beyond the predictions provided by, say, the ubiquitous Big-Five Model (see e.g. Hart 2013, on jealousy as a 'dimension of temperament', discussed below, and Wade and Walsh 2008, on how jealousy seems unrelated to Big-Five dimensions). Consequently, conceptualisations of the given emotion trait become very broad and inclusive – designating clustered affect profiles rather than single-track emotions – and measures are typically deemed adequate mostly on grounds of incremental validity (beyond the Big-Five, for example).[3]

Consider recent psychological research into gratitude and its predictive value. Thus, Wood, Maltby, Stewart and Joseph (2008) conceptualise gratitude as a broad, unitary personality trait involving 'a life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in the world'. There is no concern here with identifying features that are conceptually necessary for ascriptions of gratitude to be fitting, nor with grounding this specification rigorously either in the judgements of the 'many' or the 'wise'. For example, this specification seems to straddle the meaning of various specific emotion concepts such as appreciation, indebtedness and thankfulness. Philosophers may find this approach *ad hoc* and off-putting, but armed with their cluster or umbrella concept of gratitude, Wood, Froh and Geraghty (2010) have found effects of what they call 'gratitude', and of simple 'gratitude' interventions, whose incremental value in predicting subjective well-being is truly astonishing. From their practical perspective, this is all that matters. In response to philosophical quibbles about conceptual sloppiness, the psychologists may simply ask: if it turns out, say, that a presumed combined trait of envy-plus-jealousy is as good or better at predicting significant life outcomes than envy and jealousy understood separately, what would be the point of the philosophical hairsplitting of insisting on a strict conceptual distinction between the two?

Set in the context of debates about the nature of conceptual studies, the psychological route that I have described here is characterised by embracing the *problem of heterogeneity*

(the problem of divergent usage of the same emotion term, such as 'jealousy', see Fredericks, 2012, p. 1) head-on by being as permissive as possible and focusing on broad constellations or profiles of meaning. Not all theorists who apply this approach are as relaxed as Wood and his colleagues about actual lay conceptions, but those who do enlist them often do so through so-called *prototype analyses*: asking participants to give examples of items falling under or being closely associated with the given concept, prioritising those in terms of centrality. Prototypicality of items is then gauged via the frequency with which participants have generated exemplars and the priority with which they have listed them (see e.g. Fehr 1988; cf. Morgan, Gulliford and Kristjánsson 2014). Notice that no distinction is made in prototype analyses between features that philosophers might consider necessary for the apt application of the term in question versus features that are just frequently associated with it. What we end up with, then, is what I called above a clustered 'umbrella concept' of features connected by Wittgensteinian family resemblances, but without any necessary common core; hence, prototype analyses might be more felicitously termed 'family-resemblance analyses'.[4]

In what follows, I refer to a broad concept of jealousy *qua* 'dimension of temperament' (Hart 2013), understood along those family-resemblance lines, as 'broad-trait jealousy', in contradistinction to the sort of jealousy that philosophers are generally interested in demarcating *conceptually* as a specific emotion and *morally* as a specific emotion trait (see e.g. Farrell 1980; Kristjánsson 2002), as indicated for example by the tentative formal definition of jealousy suggested at the beginning of this article. In short, then, there are three types of jealousy at issue in the philosophical and psychological literatures. There is the simple episodic form of jealousy as an occurrent 'passion' ('A is jealous of B at this moment'); there is the narrow trait-form of this particular emotion ('A is prone to feeling jealous of this B and other Bs'); and there is the broad trait-form of A being a person with a certain 'temperament' or 'personality profile'[5] which disposes A to feelings of jealousy as an

episodic emotion, but also to a number of other related emotions, attitudes and beliefs, which together may have significant predictive value with respect to salient life-outcome variables ('A is of the suspicious, neurotic kind who always thinks she is going to be disfavoured by others, and this detracts from her life satisfaction').

Because philosophers are typically interested in narrower emotion constructs than psychologists, what they typically do is to argue for the aptness of more specific emotion conceptualisations than the family-resemblance ones. They do so through what they call 'conceptual analysis', a critical and revisionary process where they start by eliminating ordinary uses that are 'obviously careless, imprecise, or misjudged' (see Purshouse 2004, 181, on such uses of 'jealousy') but respecting as far as possible the linguistic intuitions of 'insightful' and 'sensitive' language users (Roberts 2003, 57; cf. 37–38). After working through examples and counter-examples to revise the characterisation piecemeal, the resulting concept, with its ragged ordinary-language edges duly trimmed, typically has a common core of necessary features but open-textured boundaries. Roberts's (2004) classic elucidation of the necessary features of gratitude and Farrell's on jealousy (1980) provide a platinum bar for analyses of this kind, whether or not we consider them to have identified the 'right' conceptual features. It remains a constant challenge, however, for philosophical concept analysts to mediate a middle course between plodding docility before, and fanciful flight from, laypeople's linguistic intuitions. It remains a challenge, also, to justify this method to practically minded psychologists who find the preoccupation with conceptual clarity and systematisation at best quirky or mildly amusing – and who often do not understand all the fuss about the logical serviceability of conceptualisations being more important than incremental validity with respect to predictions.

I hope this detour into different psychological and philosophical approaches to conceptualisations and conceptual studies will be helpful when considering recent writings

about the emotion of jealousy in the following section. Another salient difference needs to be mentioned also, relating to the 'moral' in 'moral emotions'. Psychologists' alleged shyness of normativity does not prevent them from analysing in some depth the moral implications of emotions, witness for instance the much-cited analysis by McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons and Larson (2001) of the positive moral nature of gratitude as a 'moral barometer', 'reinforcer' and 'motivator', or the long list by Wurmser and Jarass (2008), mentioned in the following section, of the negative moral implications of (sexual) jealousy. There may even be a case for arguing that in analyses of this sort, social science shades into moral philosophy proper. A salutary difference remains, nevertheless, between these analyses and the ones typically conducted by philosophers. What psychologists typically focus on are the *extrinsic* benefits of a given broad emotion trait for pro-social ends: say, for peace, harmony and general well-being in society. While clearly not indifferent to such ends, philosophers – at least Aristotle-inspired ones – tend to be more interested in the *intrinsic* value of a specific narrow emotion trait for the individual's moral flourishing (see e.g. Kristjánsson 2015, on gratitude as a moral end in itself). These different moral foci carry significant ramifications for the sort of conceptual inquiries that appeal to philosophers. As Purshouse correctly notes, in the case of jealousy, philosophers like to describe emotion concepts in ways that facilitate the sort of normative evaluations to which they subsequently want to subject the relevant emotion *qua* trait (2004, 181). This is one more reason why philosophers resent the depiction of emotions as broad-brush personality profiles, held together by family resemblances, as such profiles tend to be too wide and amorphous to lend themselves easily to moral justification (and subsequent educational promotion) as intrinsically valuable states of character. For example, it would be an impossible moral task to pass a collective judgement about the different emotions making up the Big-Five personality trait of openness, with

respect to whether or not they form intrinsically valuable constituents of the good life. Probably some do and some do not.

If readers have grown pessimistic at this point about the value of academic trespassing in the field of emotion research – given that psychologists and philosophers do not seem to be interested in 'emotion' in the same sense and hence offer conceptual accounts that are often not competing – let me reiterate that, from a virtue ethical point of view, there is no reasonable alternative to members of each camp being aware of what their counterparts are doing. As noted in the 'Introduction', without empirical evidence, emotion philosophy runs the risk of becoming practically trivial; without philosophical work, social science risks being conceptually barren (cf. Alfano 2016). The current maturity of cross-disciplinary work differs considerably between sub-fields, however. For instance, in gratitude studies most psychologists seem to be aware of Roberts's (2004) classic conceptual analysis, and it is frequently cited there. In jealousy studies, on the other hand, Farrell's (1980) trailblazing article – which set the standard for all subsequent philosophical work on jealousy – is rarely mentioned outside the charmed circle of philosophers. I consider this to be a major stumbling block to productive work on jealousy. At all events, it explains why there is almost no conceptual or substantive interplay between recent discourses on jealousy in psychology and philosophy, respectively. I have reviewed the sparse philosophical writings in a separate article (Kristjánsson 2016), however, and will leave them out of further consideration here.

Recent work on jealousy in psychology

This section falls broadly into two parts. I first chart the continuation of some major themes that were already in existence in psychology pre-2000 (as evidenced in my 2002 overview): the preoccupation with sexual and pathological jealousy; the apparent conflation in the literature of the fear of finding a reason for becoming jealous with jealousy proper; and the

(often surreptitiously) invoked assumption that jealousy demands exclusivity. I then turn to new and emerging themes, especially about developmental aspects of jealousy traceable back to early childhood.

Sexual and pathological jealousy. The almost exclusive emphasis on sexual and pathological jealousies was arguably a cramping and coarsening feature of the 20th-century psychological discourse (see Kristjánsson 2002, 151–157). Although not as prominent as before, some of that emphasis still remains, for example in Wurmser and Jarass's 2008 edited volume, where the word 'jealousy' is simply understood as a synonym of 'sexual jealousy'.[6] The editors' own (2008) contribution bears the title 'Pathological Jealousy: The Perversion of Love', which may seem to indicate that they consider other, *non*-pathological, forms of jealousy to exist. However, that impression is spoiled by their favourable reference to the view (from a 1929 lecture by Ernest Jones) that 'normal' jealousy is uncommon, with jealousy resting 'for the greatest part' on an 'abnormal and neurotic basis' (cited in Wurmser and Jarass 2008, 10). The whole volume focuses on jealousy as an emotional over-reaction – characterised by the negative moral implications of shame, resentment, narcissism, helplessness, wounded self-esteem, infatuation and an inability to love (see references in Wurmser and Jarass 2008 to findings from the psychoanalytical literature) – and how to cope with it, if not (ideally) eradicate it. It would be tempting to dismiss this approach as conceptually inadequate, and rebuke it for turning a deaf ear to considerable psychological evidence which shows no correlation between jealousy on the one hand and neurosis or mental illness on the other (Clanton 1996). After having seen this same tendency, however, in explorations of other negatively felt emotions, such as shame (Kristjánsson 2014), I consider it more fruitful to illuminate the roots of this approach rather than repudiate it. The psychologists who write about jealousy in this way typically hail from a clinical background. Whether philosophers like it or not, pathological forms of jealousy – more often than not of

the sexual kind – permeate the practice of psychoanalysts and psychotherapists. The psychologists in question are not pursuing bad philosophy, therefore; they are simply engaging in a clinical 'business-as-usual' psychology, harking back all the way to a time when a distinction was made in psychopathology between ordinary 'emotions' and disruptive 'passions' (Charland 2010). Perhaps we need a positive-psychology revolution in jealousy studies to buck this trend. That will be easier said than done here, however, as many so-called positive psychologists still labour under the illusion that a 'positive emotion' must be a 'positively *felt* emotion' (for a critique, see Kristjánsson 2013), which would obviously rule jealousy out of reckoning.

Jealousy as fearful and distinct from envy. A very odd conceptualisation about the difference between jealousy and envy has crept into the literature at some point and still crops up from time to time. It states that 'in envy we wish to obtain something that the other has and in jealousy we fear losing something that we already have to someone else' (Ben-Ze'ev 2013, 41). The motivation to distinguish between jealousy and envy is understandable. From a philosophical perspective, it makes for a neat and tidy specification to be able to distinguish between *covetousness* as a one-party emotion, *envy* as a two-party emotion and *jealousy* as a three-party one. From a psychological perspective, such a distinction helps to underpin hypotheses about the different empirical correlates of envy and jealousy, with envy, for instance, being associated with feelings of inferiority and longing, but jealousy with fear of loss (Parrott and Smith 1993). However, even if we acknowledge that envy and jealousy are not the same emotion, we are not bound to end up with the distinction that Ben-Ze'ev takes for granted (without argument), nor does it exclude the possibility that one emotion could form an element of the other. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how jealousy can fail to be envious; if A does not resent C's relative favouring of B and want to take it away from B, then a core element in the jealousy compound is missing.[7] I also find the assumed *fear*

element of jealousy puzzling. Arguably, for jealousy to be rational, A must have a reason to believe that B has taken, or is going to take, away C's favouring. It is not enough that A fears that this may possibly happen (Kristjánsson 2002). Briefly put, fearing that you may, at a future point in time, find a reason to be jealous is not to experience the emotion of jealousy, but simply to be fearful or suspicious.

Someone might complain that I am being too constrictive here. After all, a distinction between prospective deterrent shame and retrospective post-mortem shame is well entrenched in the shame literature (Kristjánsson 2014); should we not also, as Rydell and Bringle (2007) suggest, distinguish between two kinds of jealousy: suspicious and reactive? There is a stark disanalogy here, however. Prospective shame is still shame. It is not simply *fear* of doing something shameful in the future but, rather, shame over the very fact that one considers a possible shameful action as an option here and now. In contrast, so-called suspicious or anticipatory jealousy is not jealousy here and now but fear that some deprival of favouring will happen in the future that will give one a reason to experience the relevant composite of jealousy-forming emotions (Kristjánsson 2002, 149–150). That said, A could be suspicious without any good reason that C has *already* started to favour B; in that case, A is experiencing genuine jealousy, albeit irrational, not only fear of future jealousy. Notably, careful philosophical analyses of jealousy by people like Roberts (2003) avoid the conflation of fear and jealousy. Roberts talks about the favour being construed as 'in the process of being lost to the rival, or as already so lost, or as about to be lost' (2003, 257). Moreover, the most painful experiences of jealousy surely involve cases where there is no hope of a reversal of fortunes – not when one has got something that one still hopes to retain – namely cases where C's favouring has been irrevocably lost over to B.

Everything that I have said so far indicates that adding fear to jealousy simply involves a confusing expansion of the emotion concept. What we need to take into account

here, however, is the message from the preceding section: that what psychologists are typically interested in is not jealousy as a specific emotion or a narrow emotion trait but rather broad-trait jealousy *qua* expansive personality trait. It is highly likely that a person who is strongly disposed to feeling jealousy is also disposed to feeling bouts of suspicion about future jealousies, frequently and intensely. Conceptual accounts that exclude fear from, versus those that include it in, the definition of jealousy may then no longer be seen as competing for the same ground, as they are not about 'jealousy' in the same sense.

Possessiveness and exclusivity. An historically common (if often implicit) assumption in the psychological literature, whose glib endorsement still lingers on, is that the essence of jealousy lies in the 'absoluteness and exclusivity of the demanded relationship', and the fact that A wants to 'take possession' of C (Wurmser and Jarass 2008, 5, 9; cf. Ben-Ze'ev 2013, 48). This feature, as much or more than any other, has probably been responsible for bringing jealousy into disrepute. Yet it is decidedly odd. In standard cases of rational jealousy, for example among siblings, or students in a classroom, the demand is not for exclusive or unequalled affection/attention. Quite the contrary, the rational child just wants to be favoured *as much* as the other siblings or the other pupils by the parent/teacher; the demand is for non-differential treatment, not exclusivity. Assumptions about possessiveness as the essence of jealousy might be explained by the previously mentioned conflation of jealousy as such with sexual jealousy. Yet, the demand for exclusivity is not even a necessary feature of all sexual jealousies, for example not in open or polygamous/polyandrous relationships, where the rational demand is supposedly for relative rather than exclusive favouring.

Once again, however, I may be barking up the wrong tree, for the psychologists that I am critiquing here may not be saying that a possessive demand for exclusivity is a salient feature of jealousy as a specific emotion but rather of broad-trait jealousy. If even that modified claim raises eyebrows among philosophers, it does well to bear in mind that when

profiling broad personality traits, psychologists are trading in statistical correlations that can be deemed significant even if they are weak. So although lots of people may exist who have a strong tendency for jealousy without being possessive, it could well be that the psychologists have a case for counting possessiveness as part of the general profile of broad-trait jealousy.

Let us now turn to some newer developments in the psychological study of jealousy. The recent *Handbook of Jealousy*, edited by Hart and Legerstee (2013), moves subtly but surely away from a number of the assumptions which have bedevilled the existing psychological literature, and begins to chart a new and exciting developmental territory. The new approach does, however, import problems of its own. Before exploring those, some background observations are in order. Spurred on by reductionist evolutionary considerations, a distinction is commonly made in the psychology of emotion between basic/primary and non-basic/secondary (cognitively complex) emotions. Into the former category fall emotions such as anger, fear, disgust and sadness, because of their universality among human beings (as well as arguably also among higher animals), their developmental priority, evolutionary functional value and unique physiological expressions.

I share the doubts that many philosophers harbour about the adequacy of this distinction (see e.g. Solomon 2002). On an alternative account, basicness is more plausibly understood in relative rather than absolute terms, namely as relative to descriptions (basic 'with respect to x'), just as the so-called 'bruteness of facts' is (Kristjánsson 2002, 24–26, drawing on Anscombe 1958). For one thing, the criteria of basicness do not always align; as Sabini and Silver (2005) observe, there would be a case for arguing that jealousy is a basic emotion with respect to its evolutionary function although it does not present any unique physiological signs. Somewhat ironically, it is the most radical cognitive theorist, Martha Nussbaum – with her view that cognition is both necessary and sufficient for emotion – who has produced the strongest arguments for the case that higher animals and infants can, in fact,

experience some primitive emotions; her examples being fear, anxiety, joy and hope (2001, 120). She does so by systematically lowering the threshold for what counts as 'cognition' – as simply the reception and processing of information without any necessary reflexive self-awareness (2001, 23).

In the service of parsimony – namely, in order not to dig out the argumentative moat further than needed for present purposes – let us grant here tentatively that some sense can be made of 'basic emotions' that do not need elaborate cognitive processes, but can still count as emotions rather than mere feelings because they incorporate some primitive, rudimentary cognitions (e.g. in infants and the great apes). This concession would normally be seen to have little bearing on a conceptualisation of jealousy, for the standard view is that jealousy does not belong to this presumed category of basic emotions at all. It does not do so because jealousy is a highly cognitively complex self-conscious emotion which requires the sort of self-referential reflection that only appears in children in the second half of the second year (see below). If the compound theory of jealousy as being made up of, *inter alia*, righteous indignation (a desert-based emotion) holds good (Kristjánsson 2002), the initial time for proper ascriptions of jealousy may even have to be moved forward, as children do not normally possess a concept of fairness until the third or fourth year (Kristjánsson 2006, chap. 4).

Even for those who believe that the jealousy compound requires sadness or frustration, rather than indignation, jealousy in infants and animals will be ruled out on theoretical grounds. Recall that according to the quadratic structure of jealousy, jealousy involves A's anger at the perceived relative favouring of B over A by C. However, as Lewis (2013) correctly points out, such a cognition requires A to have built up a representation of herself as a distinct unit ('self') which can enter into relationships with other selves, for instance by becoming an object of their attention or favouring. There is ample evidence from

developmental psychology that self-representations and self-reflections of this kind are not present until a child is 15–24 months old; that is precisely when self-conscious emotions such as pride, shame and jealousy start to kick in. Before that time, children simply do not have the mental repertoire that allows them to think of themselves as discrete selves, interacting with other selves (cf. also Clanton 1996).

All this received wisdom about jealousy and self-representations comes under sustained attack in the new *Handbook* in which many authors cite the same empirical experiments done on infants, and interpret them as clear evidence of jealousy on display. These experiments show infants as young as 3–6 months getting upset when their mothers pay exclusive attention to another child or a life-like doll but not when they simply converse with the (supposedly non-rivalrous) experimenter (see e.g. Legerstee, Ellenbogen, Nienhuis and Marsh 2013, for some of those experiments). The prevailing interpretation of those findings in the *Handbook* is that 'the existence of the social bond […], the ability to participate in a social triangle, the evidence of sensitivity to social exclusion, and the revelation that infants develop an aversive feeling toward a rival provide a basis for the existence of the interpersonal jealousy system in infants during the first year of life' (Legerstee, Ellenbogen, Nienhuis and Marsh 2013, 173). The main theoretical upshot is the claim that young infants' potential for jealousy has been seriously underestimated by academics and parents alike (Draghi-Lorenz 2013). To pile on the agony for the received wisdom, some authors in the *Handbook* suggest that jealousy ascriptions should not only be extended to infants but also common animals, such as dogs, horses and even birds, based on the overwhelming majority of their owners believing that the animals can experience human emotions (Panksepp 2013).

It may be easy for philosophers to laugh off the reference to jealousy in birds and horses as a fanciful human projection – a simple example of the anthropomorphic fallacy.

The infant experiments present more of a challenge. Yet I cannot help concluding that a misstep is committed in the interpretations of the findings by psychologists such as Draghi-Lorenz (2013). This conclusion need not be drawn from the cloistered and condescending vantage point of the philosopher, but simply by drawing on the wise words of the psychologist Lewis (2013) who tries the best he can to defuse the situation and inject some modicum of sense into it. Lewis points out that similar behaviours, such as negative reactions to perceived social exclusion, witnessed at different developmental junctures, do not necessarily have to be motivated by the same processes. So the fact that the infant behaves *as if* jealous does not mean that she *is* really jealous. Lewis gives a much more theoretically parsimonious interpretation of what may be going on in those experiments, having to do with the child's frustration over the loss of a goal through the withdrawal of attention. Notice that Lewis is not making an *ad hoc* move here, as he would be doing by claiming, say, that children cannot really feel pain – although they exhibit pain behaviours – in the absence of self-reflections. There is no empirical evidence for the claim that pain requires self-reflection; there is ample evidence from developmental psychology, however (as noted above) that self-conscious emotions require the facility of self-representation which is not available to infants. Mere protest over the loss of a goal, on the other hand, does not require this facility – which supports Lewis's (2013) parsimonious interpretation.

We must realise that the interpretation of infant jealousy, which Lewis takes to task, is so radical that it not only involves the simple transfer of one emotion, jealousy, from the category of a complex, self-conscious and composite one to a primitive, simple-structured basic emotion – for nothing in the given literature indicates that jealousy is any less self-conscious than we thought – but it rather requires the abandonment of the very distinction between self-conscious and non-self-conscious emotions as based on self-representations.

That seems to be too bitter a pill to swallow at the moment when there are other more palatable theoretical medicines available to alleviate the symptoms.

Lewis tries the best he can to make sense of the profusions of confusion among his colleagues about what an emotion is and how it can be evidenced. He even suggests, compromisingly, that we might be seeing in these experiments a precursor form of jealousy: 'proto-jealousy' (2013, 28). We could expand on that suggestion by hypothesising that this proto-form had some phylogenetic or ontogenetic links to jealousy proper and might even form part of what I have earlier called broad-trait jealousy. Notice, however, that the strategy applied in the first part of this section – of explaining apparently aberrant psychological views as not really being about jealousy as the specific emotion or emotion trait, but rather broad-trait jealousy – is not available here; for it is clear from a number of chapters in the *Handbook* that the authors take themselves to be making new and revolutionary claims about the specific emotion of jealousy, as an occurrent passion, rather than broad-trait jealousy as a dimension of character.

To sum up, recent work on jealousy in psychology has provided a badly needed counterweight to psychology's previous preoccupation with sexual jealousy. Sibling jealousy is now, for example, being explored in detail – as well as jealousy's early developmental aspects and antecedents. Some of the recent literature is, however, driven by a revolutionary fervour whose rationale still lags considerably behind the evidence provided.

Concluding remarks

It remains a matter for some surprise and disappointment how rarely jealousy shows up on the academic radar in philosophical journals – even ones with cross-disciplinary aspirations such as the present one. I hope that my philosophical exploration of the psychological

discourse on jealousy has repaired some of the shameful dearth of attention given to this emotion.

Some progress has clearly been made of late in the psychological discourse on jealousy, especially concerning the early sculpting of broad-trait jealousy – jealousy as a broad trait of personality – which I have tried to distinguish carefully from jealousy as a unique, specific emotion or as a narrow emotion trait. The psychological literature is still, however, weak on conceptual analysis and overly inclined to fudge theoretical issues. Given that most psychologists – and even quite a few philosophers – profess to think that ordinary language should be the first word, if not necessarily the last, in working with naturalistic concepts, I would strongly encourage psychologists to conduct more studies of what people really mean by 'jealousy': both prototype analyses of broad-trait jealousy and careful vignette studies of specific jealousy, where respondents have a chance to distinguish it from other surrounding emotions such as mere envy. In addition, empirical studies of felt jealousy need to acquire a broader focus, to include not only sexual and sibling jealousy but also jealousy in the classroom and the workplace. Teacher interviews indicate, for example, that teachers consider irrational or immoral jealousy by colleagues a major obstacle to their work (Chen and Kristjánsson 2011).

In general, what seems to be holding jealousy research back, both in psychology and philosophy (cf. Kristjánsson 2016) is that it typically runs on parallel tracks without mutual acknowledgement. Collaborations in jealousy research are not only under-developed – as one could argue that they still are for most individual emotions – but virtually non-existent. If this article inspires some emotion enthusiasts to cross the fence in question, it will not have been written in vain.

Notes

1. Among philosophers, Purshouse (2004) and Fredericks (2012) constitute notable exceptions, however, as they reject both the compound view of jealousy and its necessary quadratic structure. Moreover, as will become apparent below, many psychologists are not interested in jealousy in this basic, episodic sense and hence offer no conceptual accounts of it as such.
2. See e.g. Panksepp's complaint that jealousy is 'one of the least studied emotions in the field of affective science' (2013, 101).
3. It could be argued that the reason for this interest in broad traits and their predictive value as 'dimensions of temperament' stems from the fact that most of the psychologists I am citing here are personality psychologists. While it is true that many social psychologists would baulk at this idea – and so would psychotherapists who are more interested in effective intervention than prediction – neither group has shown significant interest in understanding emotions such as gratitude or jealousy in their simple episodic forms. Social psychologists and sociologists are, for example, interested in instantiations of jealousy as social affordances of power (see e.g. Clanton 1996), but that interest also leads them to focus on jealousy as a *broad* trait of engagement in power-infested social relations.
4. Actually, in the case of jealousy, I could not identify any prototype study, nor a conceptual study based on other standard methods, such as interpretative phenomenological analysis, although both are commonly used for other well-known emotions. The most direct attempt to gauge public conceptualisations of jealousy is still an old set of studies by Parrott and Smith (1993). I have criticised those studies previously as deeply methodologically flawed (Kristjánsson 2002, 147), as the study design already presupposes the nature of jealousy as 'romantic', and a particular

distinction between envy and jealousy which the author take for granted – thus steering the findings in the direction of self-fulfilling prophecies.

5. Similarly, Big-Five personality traits, such as neuroticism or conscientiousness, are not associated with any single emotion or narrow emotion trait, but rather with a correlated constellations of traits.
6. I have argued elsewhere that sexual jealousy is, for various reasons, the least philosophically interesting and morally nuanced form of jealousy (Kristjánsson 2016). This is why I favour the approach taken in the *Handbook of Jealousy* (edited by Hart and Legerstee 2013), reviewed below, which foregrounds sibling and workplace jealousies. That said, there may be good historical reasons for considering 'sexual jealousy' the linguistic archetype of the word 'jealousy' (see Konstan 2006, 220, 243).
7. I am relying here on a simple characterisation of envy, dating back to Aristotle (2007), according to which envy signals A's resentment towards B because A conceives B as having got, or about to get, a thing (an object or a state of affairs) which A wants, coupled with the desire for this something to be taken away from B so that it can fall to A's lot instead. This characterisation is deliberately elliptical with respect to the moral rational (if any) of A's conception. If there is no good moral reason for it, then A's envy is truly malicious – and for some reason Aristotle only considered such cases – but if the conception is motivated by or associated with morally respectable concerns, the envy may well be justified (cf. La Caze 2001).

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